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V.—THE ETYMOLOGY OF ΠΡΕΣΒΥΣ.

The Vedic noun *purogavá* is usually translated by 'leader', as though it meant originally, 'going in front'. The word labors under the disadvantage of being surrounded by quite a number of seductive synonyms which determine well enough its general meaning, but at the same time tend to efface its interesting individual traits. For instance, in Rig-Veda 10, 110, 11 we have a word *purogā*, a compound of *puras* 'in front', and *gā* 'go'. This obviously means, 'going in front', 'leader': *agnir devānām abhavat purogāh*, 'Agni became the leader of the gods'. Similarly in Māitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā 4, 4, 13, *indro devānām abhavat purogāh*, 'Indra became the leader of the gods'. Or, in Rig-Veda 3, 2, 8 we have the word *purohita*, from *puras* 'in front', and *dhā* 'put', which means 'spiritual leader', 'chaplain': *agnir devānām abhavat purohitaḥ*, 'Agni became the chaplain of the gods'. Once more, we have *puraetār* 'going in front', 'leader', from *puras* 'in front' and *i* 'go'; e. g., Rig-Veda 1, 76, 2: *agne . . . ādadhāḥ sū puraetā bhāvā naḥ*, 'O Agni, pray, be thou our unerring guide'!

Under conditions such as these *purogavá* seemed a perfect synonym in passages like the following two: Atharva-Veda 12, 1, 40, *indra etu purogavāh*, 'May Indra go as guide'! Or Kāuṣika-Sūtra 104, 2, *indro no astu purogavaḥ*, 'May Indra be our guide'! In Āitareya-Brāhmaṇa 1, 13, 4 the Talmudist, in fact, explains *puraetar* by *purogava*. The result was that *purogavá* was also analysed as meaning 'going in front', and that *gava* was derived from a verb *gu* 'go'.¹ This is the way the word is treated in the Lexicons and Translations, and also in the very abundant references devoted to it in treatises on Comparative Grammar. The effect is enhanced by the usual misleading superficiality of the native Hindu commentators, who may be counted on to derive *purogavá* from *gam* 'go'. So, e. g., Sāyaṇa to Rig-Veda 10, 85, 8 glosses the word with *purogantār* and

¹ For an attempt to vindicate an Indo-European root *g^u* 'go', by the side of Indo-European *g^uem* 'go', see Persson, *Wurzelerweiterung und Wurzelvariation*, p. 150, note 3.

purato gantar; Mahīdhara to Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā by *purogama* and *agragāmin*. All mean about the same thing, 'go in front'.

And yet *gava* should give us pause. In Atharva-Veda 9, 6, 39 *adhigavā* means 'derived from the cow'; *anugavā* means 'following the cows'; *saṁgavā* is a fairly common word, meaning 'cow-gathering time', 'a certain time in the morning'; *brahmagavī* is 'the Brahman's cow'. See also *puṁgava* 'bull', 'hero'; *sugava* 'strong steer', etc. It would seem, therefore, that *purogavā* contains the same *gava*, and that it means 'fore-steer', or 'leading steer'. At first sight such an animal could be imagined as the leader of a herd, something like a bell-wether. But a passage in Āitareya-Brāhmaṇa 6, 35, 11 seems to show that *purogava* is 'fore-steer attached to a cart'. That is to say a 'leader' is attached in front of a span of yoked oxen, in order that the team may be more easily directed. The fore-steer guides; the yoke follows. The passage in question is: *dakṣiṇā vāi yajñānām purogavi yathā vā idam ano 'purogavaṁ riṣyati, evaṁ hāiva yajño 'dakṣiṇo riṣyati*, 'The fee to the priests is the fore-steer of the sacrifice. Just as a cart here comes to grief without a fore-steer, thus the sacrifice comes to grief if it is not accompanied by a fee to the priests'.

Evidently such a word could and would quickly lapse into the secondary meanings of 'leader', 'guide', 'advance agent', and the like. So, e.g., Rig-Veda 10, 85, 8: *sūryāy aṣvinā varāgnir āsit purogavāḥ*, 'The Aṣvins were the wooers of Sūryā, Agni was the leader (of the procession)'. Or Atharva-Veda 18, 4, 44: *pitāraḥ purogavāḥ . . . té tvā vahanti sukṛtām u lokām*, 'The Fathers (Manes), the fore-runners,¹ . . . they carry thee to the world of the pious.' Here, as in every other instance, *purogavā* may be used figuratively, although it is really impossible to say whether or not the authors still had in mind the primary meaning, any more than in the applied uses of the 'bell-wether', 'leithammel', or Hebrew *aīl*, plural *ēlim*, which means both 'ram' and 'chief'.² The Vedic word *prāṣṭi*,³ 'side-horse', that is, a horse helping to pull at the side of a team, similarly passes over to the meaning 'side-man', or 'assistant'; see the Lexicons. In one place, at least, Rig-Veda 10, 137, 7, we really must render *purogavā*

¹ That is, the pioneers of heaven.

² See Haupt, American Journal of Semitic Languages, XX 156; XXII 251.

³ *Prāṣṭi* = *prā-ṣṭi*, from *prā*, 'forth', and *stī*, 'being'; cf. *abhi-ṣṭi*, *ūpa-sti*, and *pāri-ṣṭi*.

literally. The passage is: *jihvā vācāḥ purogavā*, 'The tongue is the fore-steer of speech'; the applied translation, 'The tongue is the fore-runner of speech', seems rather insipid.

In English, 'leader', or 'fore-horse', is the horse at the head which guides the rest of the team. The figurative uses of fore-horse are the same as those of *purogavā*; see the Dictionary of the English Philological Society, s. v. As an instance, Shakespeare, All's Well, II, i. 30: 'I shall stay here the fore-horse to a smocke', that is, ushering in and squiring ladies. In America 'spike-team' is the designation of a team consisting of three horses,¹ or other draft-animals, two of which are at the pole while the third leads. See the Century Dictionary, and Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms, s. v.

I think that the foregoing explanation of *purogavā* contains the key to the etymology of *πρέσβυς*; Doric *πρέσγυς*; Cretan *πρέιγυς*; Boeotian *πρισγείες*.² The order in the development of the meanings of the word is not very clear. The old Epic feminine *πρέσβᾱ* seems to mean 'distinguished', 'august'; e. g., Il. 19, 91: *πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄττη*, 'Fate, the august daughter of Zeus'. Other important meanings of the word are, 'chief', 'ambassador', 'elder', 'reverend'. The general impression of scholars as to the semantic evolution of the word is, that it began with 'old'. So, recently, Brugmann, *Kurzgefasste Vergleichende Grammatik*, p. 473, dealing with *πρέσ*, 'before', comments as follows: **pres* in *πρέσ-βυς* 'old' (im alter vorausgehend). Thirty years earlier, Bezzenberger, in his *Beiträge zur Kunde der Indogermanischen Sprache* IV 345, had essentially the same explanation: *πρέσ-βυς* 'old', literally 'going before'. Indeed, as far as I know, nothing important or interesting has ever been said about the derivation of the word aside from this very analysis in *πρέσ-* 'before', and *-βυς*, *-γυς* 'going'.

The reader will guess that I regard the stems *-γυ-* and *-βυ-* in composition with *πρέσ-*, as the dialectically various Greek representatives of the Indo-European stem *gʷu* (Proto-Hellenic *γFυ*), the weakest stem to the strongest Indo-European stem *gʷou* 'bull'.³ Semantically *πρέσ-γFυ-* is the equivalent of Vedic *puro-gavā-*, meaning originally 'leading steer', or 'fore-steer'. An early

¹ Another designation of the same arrangement is 'unicorn'; see the Century Dictionary, s. v.

² Cf. Gustav Meyer, *Griechische Grammatik*³, p. 184.

³ See the author in this Journal, Vol. XVII, p. 424.

Indo-European agricultural practice is at the base of the word: to a team of yoked oxen a leading steer was fastened in front for easier guidance of the team, making up a 'spike-team'. That such a word is predestined to metonymic use Vedic *purogavá* shows very clearly, and shows how. The exact order in which the secondary meanings developed in Greek will probably never appear quite clearly; enough that the total of the meanings of the word and its derivatives are easily derivable from the sense of 'leader' as applied in English to a 'fore-horse'. The declension was perhaps originally *-γυ-ς*, feminine *-βῆ* (for *γῆ*), followed by analogical filling out of the paradigm which yielded both *-γυ-ς* and *-βυ-ς*; see Brugmann, *Vergleichende Grammatik* I², p. 595. For *πρεσ-βῆ* see Bezzenberger's interesting suggestion, in *Beiträge zur Kunde der Indogermanischen Sprachen* VII 73; cf. also J. Schmidt, *Pluralbildungen*, p. 57.

The weak stem *guu* 'bull' reminds me of weak stem-forms of Sanskrit *páṇu* 'cattle' (Indo-European *péḱu*). They are present in Vedic *kṣú* 'cattle', *kṣu-mánt* 'rich in cattle', *puru-kṣú* 'having much cattle', and, I believe, also in *virapṣín* for **vira-pṣv-in* 'rich in men and cattle'. Of this elsewhere.

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